

January 2009

**“He has granted us new life to rebuild the house of our God
and repair its ruins....”**

Ezra 9:9 NIV

The Mission of New Life:

***being gifts of grace to reach, rebuild,
and release life in others***

It feels like I am just repeating a cliché, but I cannot grasp that 2008 has become a part of history and we are beginning a new year. I want to share a few thoughts in this January article about our mission as a church family by first recalling the words of two men. First, from the man known to us in scripture as the meekest of men – Moses. He wrote in Psalm 90:12, ***“Teach us to make the most of our time, so that we may grow in wisdom.”*** Second, from a man of whom we know little about, except that his heart for God is revealed in the book that bears his name, Habakkuk. He wrote in chapter 3:16-19,

“Yet I will wait patiently for the day of calamity to come on the nation invading us. Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights.”

Both of these men speak to us about how we can proceed boldly into 2009 all the while facing challenges on many fronts. Our media is saturated with bad news about societal breakdown, international strife, and world-wide economic recession. Pressing in upon us like a hurricane force wind asserting pressure upon a home, these issues are real and have potentially devastating consequences for the individual, the family, and for nations around this planet. The loss of jobs, the breakdown of marriage, and the tug of war for power and authority among nations are indicative of the decaying nature of our times. Such challenges are not new, nor are they a surprise to our Heavenly Father. Viewing life through the lens of His Word, through the prophetic ministry of the Holy Spirit, and in vital relationship with other members of Jesus’ Body is essential for living hope-filled, peace-inspired, and joy capacitated lives that look like Jesus to the core. Moses teaches us that challenging times are still days of grace and present an opportunity to grow personally, corporately, and to be used redemptively by God. Like driving in a hard rain, or in a snow storm, our focus in driving is just naturally drawn a lot closer to our own vehicle due to feeling a bit on the edge or that our situation could get out of our control very quickly, our immediate pressing needs can keep us from “big picture” living and from fulfilling our God-given calling. Moses’ wisdom is that today’s challenges are met “head on” by placing a high value upon today and the opportunities we are given versus valuing tomorrow and what may or may not be.

Valuing our relationship with Him and one another above all else is still where grace is released in and through us. Our church family has been commissioned by our Master to live as people whom He can call on throughout our everyday lives to be used by Him to bring “new life” to the broken places in our neighbor’s hearts. Co workers, next door neighbors, and friends from each of our circles of influence are all potential people whom God wants to enter into relationship with and bring wholeness to their lives. Our Father has given us new life through Christ in order that others might know new life in Him too. Habakkuk’s advice to us is similar to Moses: focus the attention of our hearts upon our Lord and Savior by choosing to rejoice in His Power and His Faithfulness; trusting Him to bring to an end to the present trying circumstances we face, all the while, refusing to allow them to speak death to us and our future. Our earthly reality is hard, and it may even get more difficult, but we can refuse to allow what we see with our eyes to become the final say about our future.

Habakkuk declared that lack and bad news abounded, but His hope was in the new life promised by our Savior. His hope in the superintendence of God over His life is ours today, and our society is longing to experience this redemptive hope too. Let’s choose in this coming year to be His instruments of new life and to trust Him for many, many people coming to know Him as Savior and as Lord. My prayer for us is that this coming year will be one where we see His grace bear much fruit in our lives by giving ourselves first of all to Him –that we might do this by applying ourselves to be fully equipped to be used by Him, and then by living out what we are learning of Him by loving one another deeply in ways that facilitates His healing touch in and through us. May this be our guiding prayer for 2009.

Pastor Dave